

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined ("____") being added and the language that contains strikethrough ("—") being deleted:

1. (Currently Amended) A communication method comprising:

receiving, by a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a first sender to a the first recipient;

performing, by the messaging client of the first recipient, a forwarding operation comprising:

waiting, by the messaging client of the first recipient, a predefined time interval for an input from the first recipient, the input being responsive to the instant messaging message;

determining, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; and

in response to determining, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, prompting querying the first sender for to grant permission to forward, by the messaging client of the first recipient, the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicate, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that the instant messaging message originated from the first sender; and

performing, by the messaging client of the first recipient, a joining operation comprising:

in response to receipt, by the messaging client of the first recipient, of the instant messaging message from the first sender to the first recipient and a determination, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that the first recipient is engaged in an instant

messaging session with a second sender, querying the first sender ~~is queried~~ to join the instant messaging session, wherein in response to ~~determining~~ receiving, by the messaging client of the first recipient, confirmation that the first sender desires to join the instant messaging session, querying the second sender ~~is queried to determine whether to grant permission allowing~~ allow the first sender to join the instant messaging session; and wherein ~~querying the second sender to allow the first sender to join the instant messaging session includes an automatically generated response to the instant messaging message from the first sender to the first recipient by an instant messaging client of the first recipient, without input from the first recipient;~~ and

joining the first sender in the instant messaging session with the first recipient and the second sender after receiving permission from the second sender.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the instant messaging message, wherein replying to the instant messaging message comprises:

providing a message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the instant messaging message, wherein replying to the instant messaging message comprises:

providing a message requesting the first sender to wait for a predetermined time period.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising replying to the instant messaging message, wherein replying to the instant messaging message comprises:

periodically providing messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

5. (Currently Amended) A communication method comprising:

receiving, by a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a first sender to ~~a~~ the first recipient;

~~determining whether input from the first recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;~~

~~in response to determining that no input is received from the first recipient during the predetermined time interval;~~ determining, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with a second sender; and

in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in ~~an~~ the instant messaging chat session with the second sender, ~~prompting requesting, by the messaging client of the first recipient, for authorization from~~ the first sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that the instant messaging message originated from the first sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the messaging client of the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the first sender.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, further comprising:

indicating to the first sender that the first recipient is engaged in ~~an~~ the instant messaging chat session with the second sender.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 5, further comprising: periodically providing messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 5, further comprising:

indicating to the first sender that the first recipient is unavailable to engage in an instant messaging chat session with the first sender.

10. (Currently Amended) A non-transitory computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program such that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

receive, at a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a sender to a the first recipient;

wait, at the messaging client of the first recipient, a predefined time interval for an input from the first recipient, the input being responsive to the instant messaging message;

determine, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; and

in response to determining that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval, ~~prompt~~ requesting, by the messaging client of the first recipient, for authorization from the sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that the

instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the messaging client of the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender.

11. (Previously Presented) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

provide a message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session.

12. (Previously Presented) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

provide a message requesting the sender to wait for a predetermined time period.

13. (Previously Presented) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 10, further configured to perform at least the following:

periodically provide messages, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

14. (Currently Amended) A non-transitory computer-readable medium encoded with a computer program such that when executed by a computer performs at least the following:

receive, at a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a first sender to a the first recipient;

~~determine whether input from the first recipient is received during a predetermined time interval;~~

~~in response to determining that no input from the first recipient is received during the predetermined time interval; determine, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with second sender; and~~

in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an the instant messaging chat session with the second sender, ~~prompt request, by the messaging client of the first recipient, for authorization from~~ the first sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the messaging client of the first recipient, that the instant messaging message originated from the first sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the messaging client of the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the first sender.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently Amended) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

indicate that the first recipient is engaged in ~~an~~ the instant messaging chat session with the second sender.

17. (Previously Presented) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

periodically provide messages to the first sender, the messages being periodically provided at predefined time intervals, each message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session during the corresponding predefined time interval.

18. (Previously Presented) The non-transitory computer-readable medium of claim 14, further configured to perform at least the following:

indicate that the first recipient is unavailable to engage in an instant messaging chat session with the first sender.

19. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

means for receiving, at a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a sender to a the first recipient;

~~means for determining whether the first recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval;~~

~~means for, in response to determining that the first recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval,~~ determining, at the messaging client of the first recipient, whether the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another sender;

means for, in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another sender, replying, at the messaging client of the first recipient, to the instant messaging message; and

means for, in response to determining that the first recipient is not engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another user, prompting requesting, at the messaging client of the first recipient, for authorization from the sender to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicate, by the first recipient, that the instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the messaging client of the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender,

wherein all the means are embodied as hardware controlled by software.

20. (Currently Amended) A communication system comprising:

a memory component that stores:

instant-messaging receive logic configured to receive, at a messaging client of a first recipient, an instant messaging message from a sender to a the first recipient;

first determining logic configured to determine, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether the first recipient has provided an input during a predefined time interval;

~~second~~ the determining logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient has not provided an input during the predetermined time interval, determine, by the messaging client of the first recipient, whether the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another sender, wherein the determining logic comprises a timer configured to track elapsed time from a receiving of the instant messaging message;

reply logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient is engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another sender, reply, by the messaging client of the first recipient, with a reply message to the instant messaging message, the reply message indicating the first recipient's unavailability to engage in an instant messaging chat session; and

~~prompting~~ querying logic configured to, in response to determining that the first recipient is not engaged in an instant messaging chat session with another sender, prompt query, by the messaging client of the first recipient, the sender for authorization to forward the instant messaging message from the first recipient to a second recipient and indicating, by the first recipient, that the instant messaging message originated from the sender, wherein the instant messaging message is forwarded from the messaging client of the first recipient to the second recipient after receiving authorization from the sender.

21-22. (Canceled)

23. (Previously Presented) The system of claim 20, further comprising a processor configured to execute logic stored in the memory component.